

Bobcat Harvest 2003

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Abstract

The 2003 Wisconsin bobcat harvest was 371 including 21 taken off reservations by native hunters/trappers. The non-treaty harvest included 96 bobcats that were trapped, 224 shot over dogs, 24 taken incidental to other types of hunting/trapping, and 6 taken with method of harvest unrecorded. The counties of highest harvest were Oneida (38), Price (37), Sawyer (37), and Ashland (33). The sex ratio from registration data was 1.01 males to 1 female, while the sex ratio from carcass collection was 1.59 males per female.

Background

Pils and Bluett (1984) discussed the background of Wisconsin's bobcat harvest management system and Dhuey, et al. (2003) described the results of the 2002 bobcat trapping season. Wisconsin's bobcat season runs from mid-October to the end of December in that portion of the State north of Highway 64. All hunters and trappers must obtain a special harvest permit before pursuing bobcats, and the annual bag limit is one bobcat per person. The application fee for bobcat harvest permits is \$3.00, and successful applicants are selected by random drawing.

Methods

All bobcats must be registered by DNR Law Enforcement personnel and their carcasses turned over to the DNR for research purposes. The area of kill (county and deer management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, method of harvest, and the name and address of the hunter or trapper were recorded for each bobcat registered. These data were entered into the DNR UNIX computer by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). All bobcat carcasses collected were examined to document the sex and age structure of the harvest, and to determine reproductive and mortality rates in the population.

Results

A total of 6,395 hunters and trappers applied for 1,380 bobcat harvest permits available in 2003 (Table 1). The season ran from 18 October through 31 December, with 371 bobcats being harvested. This included tribal, non-tribal, and incidental bobcat kills. This was an increase from the 2002 total of 253 bobcats, was above the 1980-2002 average of 178, and is the highest harvest recorded over the 24-year period.

Sixty-four percent of the bobcats killed in 2003 were shot over dogs and 27% were trapped (Table 2). In 2002, 48% of the bobcats were taken over dogs and 38% were trapped. Bobcats taken incidental to other hunting/trapping activities comprised 7% of the harvest. Method of harvest was unrecorded for 6 bobcats harvested.

In 2003, Chippewa hunters/trappers took 21 bobcats on ceded lands (data provided by Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission; Jonathan Gilbert, April 2004 memo). Five bobcats were registered with a kill location on a Wisconsin reservation. These kills are included in the statewide totals.

Bobcats killed incidentally are registered with the WDNR. In 2003, 12 bobcats were registered as incidental kills. Six of the twelve incidental kills were road kills.

The average pelt price for bobcats in 2003 (\$67.23; ranged from \$20 to \$125) was higher than in 2002 (\$46.31), this was the highest price paid for bobcats since 1987 and much above the prices paid over the past 4-5 years.

Oneida county led all other counties with a harvest of 38, followed by Price (37), and Sawyer(37)(Fig. 1). Deer Management Unit 13 had the highest harvest at 28, followed by units 28 (20), and 25 (20)(Fig. 2).

Weather conditions, particularly the number of days with new snowfall, can have a major effect on the success rate of bobcat hunters/trappers. Weather conditions during the 2003 bobcat season were ideal with many days of fresh snow cover during December. The excellent tracking conditions made bobcat easy to locate and pursue during the late season and increased permit success. Non-tribal permit success was 24% in 2003 (Table 3); this was higher than the 16% permit success hunters/trappers had in 2002, and the highest recorded in the past 24 years.

Carcasses were obtained from 259 of the 371 bobcats killed in 2003. The sex ratio of carcasses examined was 1.59 males per 1 female. The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee has recommended a harvest goal of 375 bobcats for the 2004 season.

Literature Cited

Dhuey B. B. Kohn and J. Olson. 2003. Bobcat Harvest, 2002. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report, August 2003. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Monona, WI 53716

Pils, C. M. and R. Bluett. 1984. The 1984 Wisconsin bobcat harvest summary. Wis. Dep. of Nat. Resour. 8pp.

Table 1. *Total number of permits issued, bobcats harvested, and average pelt price from 1980 to 2003.*

Year	# of Permits Issued	Total Harvest	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1980	1,840	90	84.00
1981	2,675	208	78.93
1982	2,972	139	70.67
1983	3,214	206	61.91
1984	3,089	260	71.93
1985	4,191	189	61.78
1986	4,064	183	86.55
1987	5,114	247	85.37
1988	5,285	165	55.34
1989	5,051	136	48.08
1990	4,359	98	56.79
1991	2,358	71	35.24
1992	2,300	217	37.52
1993	2,000	160	45.02
1994	2,000	169	36.17
1995	2,000	111	45.47
1996	2,000	166	44.75
1997	2,000	216	43.70
1998	1,860	194	41.25
1999	1,540	187	46.24
2000	1,490	280	41.88
2001	781	152	41.81
2002	1,330	253	46.31
2003	1,380	371	67.23

Table 2. *The 2003 Wisconsin bobcat harvest by method of harvest. These data do not include the Chippewa harvest.*

Harvest Method	Number Harvested	Percent Harvested
Trapped	96	27.4%
Shot over Dogs	224	64.0%
Incidental to Other Hunting	24	6.9%
Unrecorded	6	1.7%

Table 3. *The 2003 Wisconsin bobcat harvest goal and applicant results.*

Non-tribal Harvest Goal*	Applicants	Permits Issued	Tags/ Applicant	Non-tribal, Non-Incidental Harvest	Permit Success Rate
256	6,395	1,380	0.22	332	24.1%

* The total Wisconsin harvest goal was 290 bobcats. This included an accepted tribal declaration of 34. The non-tribal harvest goal was 256.

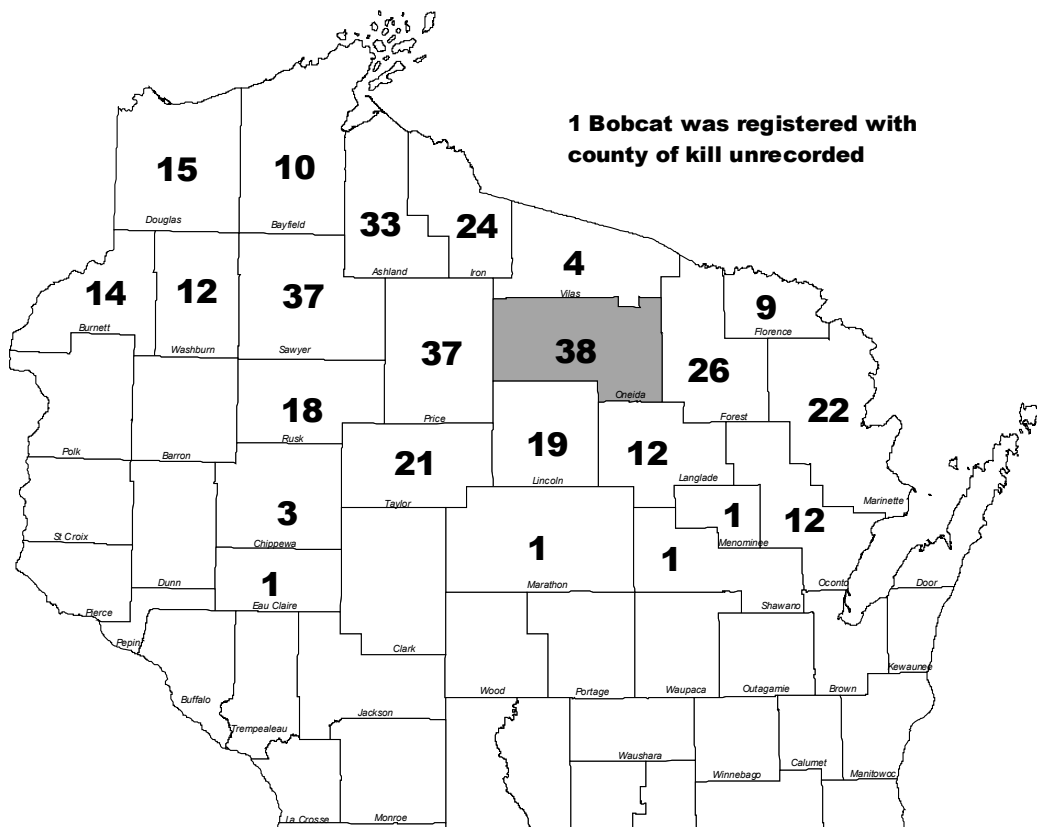


Figure 1. Harvest of Wisconsin bobcats by county during 2003. Shaded area highlights the county of highest harvest.

